

non tam praecipites ruunt currus: The Boat Race of Aeneas.
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Many scholars have commented on the funeral games for Anchises in Book 5 of the *Aeneid*. Among them, Putnam (1966) 64 ff. shows that the games in general reinforce the theme of sacrifice through suffering, while Dunkle (2005) demonstrates that the boat race is a metaphor for the journeys of Aeneas. Anchises' games are clearly modeled after the funeral games for Patroclus in Book 23 of the *Iliad*. The very first competition has a notable alteration: Vergil has transformed Homer's chariot race (*Iliad* 23.287-538) into a boat race (*Aeneid* 5.114-285). Knight (1971) 112, thinks the change "forced, and even unpleasantly humorous." Willcock (1988) 2 finds historical precedents which may have inspired Vergil. Briggs (1975) 275-6 draws parallels to Augustan naval competitions, especially to staged *naumachiae*. But it seems that no one has noted the internal difficulty that comes with the change: namely, ships are much more important to Aeneas and his Trojans than chariots are to Achilles and the Achaeans. If something should happen to a chariot, the Argives can go out and steal another one. And the potential for accidents would be very real. Feldherr (1995) 250 points out that "what made chariot racing so exciting was the possibility for spectacular crashes." Further, the Achaeans are not dependent on chariots to both preserve their lives and to fulfill their destiny, while Aeneas needs all of his ships in order to keep his people safe and intact until they reach the land Fate has ordained for them. It would be a catastrophe should anything happen to even one of the vessels. The race itself features a conflict between the rash Gyas, who wants to steer dangerously close to the rocks, and the more conservative Menoetas; and in the end, Sergestus cripples his ship due to his recklessness. The question, then, is why does Aeneas risk a valuable commodity just for entertainment?

The easy answer is that the Trojans do not have any chariots, as noted by Williams (1972) *ad* 114ff. But there is something deeper. Throughout the poem, Aeneas is seen as a reluctant traveler. He would rather fight his way through Troy than escape. He tries to establish permanent settlements in Thrace and Crete, and he seems happy to stay with Dido, building Carthage. Even at the end of Book 5, after the women have set fire to part of the fleet, Ascanius is the first to react. Eventually, Aeneas and the others follow; but our hero hesitates twice, showing ambivalence even after Jupiter has put out the flames. Only after the ghost of Anchises appears does Aeneas make up his mind to continue his voyage. Perhaps he deliberately risks the ships in a frivolous race, hoping that if something should happen to them, he can end his journey. Or there may be another explanation. Perhaps Aeneas wants to show just how important these games are, and by extension how much he values the memory of his father. He does not have twelve captured slaves to sacrifice at the tomb of Anchises, as Achilles had for the pyre of Patroclus. And so, the Trojan leader risks something of vital importance in honor of his father. The importance of the ships can also be seen in the fact that Vergil tells us their names, in sharp contrast to most of the other ships in mythology and epic. In either case, it is clear that ships are not chariots, and Aeneas had a reason for choosing the vehicles that he did.